

**ECKERSLEY HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2012  
POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY ROOM  
6:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Ron Klattenberg, Phil Pessina, Trevor Davis, Augie DeFrance, Ed Dypa, Ryan Kennedy, Annabelle Malone, Larry Riley, Bill Wasch  
**Members Absent:** Ed Monarca  
**Others Present:** Ed Rubacha, Ray Santostefano, Beth Lapin, Off. Bill Warner, Tim Salemi (Middletown Press)  
**Guests:** John Ireland, Silver/Petrucelli; Diane Puterski, Stratford Senior Center

**1.0 OPEN MEETING**

Chair Klattenberg opened the Eckersley Hall Building Committee meeting at 6:05 PM at the Police Department Community Room.

Discussion of a change to previously approved meeting dates in January 2013 was tabled because the entire committee was not present.

**2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Klattenberg indicated that the minutes from the January 30, 2012 meeting required approval. Annabelle made the following correction: February 29<sup>th</sup> (page 3) for the next meeting should be Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Ed Dypa made the motion to accept them as corrected, seconded by Augie DeFrance. The vote to approve was unanimous.

**3.0 FINANCIAL REPORT**

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

There is no financial statement at this time.

**BUDGET ITEMS**

There are no budget items at this time.

**4.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were none.

**5.0 OLD BUSINESS**

**STATUS OF BUILDING**

Chair Klattenberg reported there is nothing new to report.

**APPLE REHAB LETTER OF INTENT**

Ron spoke to Eleanor at Apple Rehab, who was surprised that neither Ron nor Phil had received a letter of intent. She said she would contact Apple's main corporate headquarters and get back to them as soon as possible.

Ron asked, in the interest of our guest, that the presentation by Dianne Puterski, Stratford, come prior to the remaining Old Business. The committee agreed and then returned to the matters below.

#### SILVER PETRUCELLI (SP+A) ECKERSLEY HALL: WEST ENTRANCE REVIEW

After Diane's presentation, the committee initiated a discussion of the appropriate location for the entrance to Eckersley Hall. Bill Wasch emphasized the need for level entrance. He noted that all other entrances had split level features while the west entrance did not, although it would require excavation and widening of the existing ramp and door.

John Ireland addressed the issue, agreeing that it would be preferable to have an entrance at level but potentially expensive. He reviewed that the group had agreed to infill the cafetorium to provide a consistent level for the first floor. Also, he reminded that, from security standpoint, there should be only one front entry. He focused on the Durant (east) entry, suggesting that a west entrance would negatively impact the size of the large room and change the building's character. He indicated that ideally the driveway would be cut down three feet, with a second option of the driveway staying as is and the walkway dropping down, resulting in a first floor entrance in either case. Both would require a drainage management to keep water from pooling. Saying he'd rather spend money on the building instead of the cutting, Phil asked if there could be any other alternative, such as removing a staircase and covering the drop with a gradual walk down to the back room.

Augie asked if there would be savings in the elevator if the split entrance were addressed, and John indicated it would be minor. Trevor suggested the architect provide the committee with an evaluation of east entrance options (both drive and sidewalk descents and perhaps some type of interior ramp). The group acknowledged it would require an initial investment to provide a long-term solution to this architectural challenge. John said he would check with the town engineer to see if topographical measurements of the entrance already exist. Ron said he would look into getting the engineering department's backhoe to scoop the ground near the entrance to determine the foundation's depth.

Ron asked about fire regulations for up to 125 people and John indicated that would be met, including several features such as push bars for the doors. The proposal included a new sprinkler system.

Ed Dypa raised the issue of uncertainty of move-in of departments, and suggested the north half of the second floor be dedicated as office space. Ray said Recreation required two offices: a private office and one room for four other staff. Ron indicated that the Government efficiency task force is scheduled to meet February 22 at 7:00 PM. Larry asked if there would be a decision on the 22<sup>nd</sup>; Ron said a recommendation was anticipated by early to mid March. Trevor noted that the lack of program direction at this point made determining room size and layout difficult.

John indicated he would be able to provide an analysis of several options, to the extent possible with existing and acquired measurements, by the February 28<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## POSTING MINUTES ON CITY OF MIDDLETOWN WEB SITE

Beth reported that all agendas and minutes from 2012 are now on the City of Middletown web site (<http://www.cityofmiddletown.com/content/737/83/2026.aspx>). At the site ([www.cityofmiddletown.com](http://www.cityofmiddletown.com)), click on 'government' near the top right and 'agendas and minutes' on the left side. Eckersley Hall is listed there. She will provide copies of these documents for posting from this point forward.

## ORDINANCE

Ron indicated the ordinance to clarify the Senior Center Fund, as discussed in previous EH meetings, was approved at the Common Council meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup>. This will allow donations to be made to the new senior center; the current senior center already has a program fund in place.

## 6.0 NEW BUSINESS

### STRATFORD SENIOR CENTER

Chairman Klattenberg introduced Diane Puterski, Director of the Stratford Senior Center. Diane, who has been there six years, noted that Stratford's population is 49,000 and 13,000 are 60 and older (25%), one of the highest rates in the state. Her office provides six different programs related to elderly services, with an overall budget of \$500K from the town and \$120K in grant funds:

1. Baldwin Center, which was discussed in details that follow
2. Transportation: available to 60 and older, non-driving resident and younger disabled residents for medical appointments, shopping, transportation to center, bank, PO, etc if time available. Diane said this was partially town funding (scheduler and p-t driver), with vehicles from Dept of Transportation and other grants for p-t driver. Annabelle asked about costs to participants; Diane responded that medical rides were grant-covered and thus free throughout Fairfield and New Haven County; other trips were \$1 each way, except those who came to the Baldwin Center for meals, which were free.
3. Municipal agent (f-t) assists with benefits, entitlements, food stamps, energy assistance, and related items. Diane noted they are now seeing younger folks doing early planning. The agent sees 125 people each month and fields 350 phone calls. Dianne suggested it was important to think ten to fifteen years down the road, as residents in Connecticut are aging.
4. Outreach Coordinator (grant funded) makes home visits to older adults, plans programs at the Housing sites, and coordinates intergenerational programs.
5. Family Caregiver counselor works mostly with adult children who are trying to keep parents at home.
6. CARES program for at-risk frail elder social programs (2.5 staff); staff provide a wide range of appropriate activities (45 minutes in length) from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, in a protected and structured environment at the Baldwin Center. Participants have memory impairment or are very physically frail but must be able to feed and toilet themselves. The fifty participants pay \$15 per day and receive transportation if needed.

In addition there are five senior housing complexes. Occasionally members participate in Baldwin Center activities. Trevor asked why their involvement was low. Diane said they felt

they were too young or unwelcome and had transportation issue. Many are low income and minority and staff have tried reaching them through modify programs (Spanish Club, Italian Club), in addition to keeping participation charges at a minimum.

Graciously fielding questions through out her presentation, Diane described in more detail the programming, layout, funding, and staffing for the Baldwin Senior Center.

**Programming:** The Baldwin Center is open five days a week from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM (staff until 4:30) and evenings for special programs. They average 300 to 350 attendees each day. Some people stay much of the day, most come just for a particular session. They provide federal nutrition meals four days a week for 60 to 70 people. Generally there are three to four concurrent activities. They use a main hall each morning for exercise, while other classes are in other parts of building. Some examples are: aerobics, tai chi, program; yoga, Reiki, Alexander method – these newer programs related to stress management bring in younger folks. A few years ago, Diane lowered the age to 55 and younger people are coming into the building although participants range to 101), which includes two to three generations, and programming must meet their needs. They also provide traditional senior center activities: bingo, knitting, and line dancing, along with computer and language classes. They offer oil painting but not pottery; their wood shop gets little use and will be dismantled shortly.

**Layout:** The building is 40,000 square feet, with no external security system. Entrance to the building is on the main level, which contains a lobby, coffee shop, and offices, and the biggest attraction, a main hall that can hold 500 people. About 70% of all programs take place in this room, which is the location for parties and dances, guest speakers, and panel discussion. For example, they hosted a session on disaster preparedness and invited other agencies. There were 12 speakers and 120 attendees.

In addition, they have smaller rooms for other sessions. On any day, a room will be used for two to three programs with different set-ups. A dedicated computer room is open all day. Ron asked if many rooms were dedicated to particular programs or more flexible. Diane indicated that most were multipurpose. They have library, with one wall of books (volunteer who takes care of the books). The room has a large table and is used for meetings. When necessary they push aside the table, set up card tables, and use it for mah-jongg and scrabble. They don't have the luxury of having many dedicated rooms.

The facility includes a full kitchen, with convection oven, regular oven, sterilizer, refrigerator, freezer, warming trays, and all the required sinks. Seniors walk through to get meals. The kitchen is a big plus for rental, as caterers love it.

Ron asked about how they and provided a welcoming atmosphere in the lobby. Diane said her lobby is large (15 x 25) with an elevator (about three feet from the door) and offices to the left. Volunteers sit at a small desk to help answer the phone and direct people who arrive. There is a large window into office if the volunteers need assistance. They have 160 volunteers and about 30 serve in the lobby.

The lobby surrounds a display case beyond which is a half-round table staffed by two volunteers. Here participants use a touch screen to indicate which programs they are using that day. (They use myseniorcenter.com from MA, which cost \$1K to purchase and \$1K annually to maintain.)

Their coffee shop, located on the other side of the lobby, is one of the most popular areas. Diane noted it was preferable to provide socialization away from the entrance, so lobby looked nice and smelled clean. In the coffee shop, there are tables, TV, recliners and couches, and small bookcases. Many people just hang out there for a few hours; they charge 50 cents for cup of coffee and volunteers run the shop. Diane would like to increase income here by providing light lunches there at some point.

The lower level (basement) has a pool room (four tables) TV, and furniture that serves as a 'man cave.' Another room functions as an arts and crafts room one day a week and wii bowling other times. It has series of windows for natural light. Furnace and storage are also located here.

When asked, Diane indicated that the facility had 14 bathrooms but no shower; most of the people who participate in high-energy programs such as Zumba go home right away and don't hang out.

In response to a question, Diane indicated that their main entrance, with sliding doors, is on the side of building and has an overhang situated about two feet away from the parking. Doors in the front of building are locked, as are six additional entrances, due to unwanted use by high school students and the homeless.

Ed Rubacha asked about floor covering and Diane indicated that the facility is mostly tiled, with some carpeting. They are installing new two-foot block carpeting that will be more easily replaced. She has found carpet very difficult to clean and has removed it from the lobby; she feels tile is safer and easier to maintain.

Ron asked about storage. Diane indicated they have many small storage areas, not so much for chairs and tables but for classes and programs.

Bill asked how people arrive and Diane said that the majority drive themselves. Ron Rubacha ask how many parking spaces were available. Diane said there were 24 handicapped spots (more than required) and about 300 spaces shared with the public library, Sterling House (community youth building), and Perry House (historical site, schools come to tour).

Phil asked about history of departments in the building. Diane said that originally it included Health, Parks, and Senior Services. There still is a clinic room as part of that history. The other departments outgrew the space and moved to other locations.

When asked about their elevator, she indicated its capacity was eight; it could hold a wheelchair and three to four others or a scooter alone She said at least six regulars come in wheelchairs, four with scooters, and many with walkers and canes. The elevator does not hold a gurney, which has been a problem. Their standard policy is to call 911 if anyone falls at the center.

Diane indicated they don't have exercise equipment because of easy access to a nearby YMCA and liability involved. People had wanted to donate equipment but the town attorney advised her that she would need a trainer to supervise whenever the room was open. Other senior centers do have fitness rooms and the committee could check to see how they handle this issue.

**Funding:** Baldwin Center is open to anyone (no membership required). They do have a membership fee of \$5 per year for residents and \$10 if nonresident. Membership includes a mailed newsletter that highlights monthly activities and reduced prices for some events. For example, for some programs, members pay 75 cents, while others pay \$1; a dance is \$20 for member, \$25 for non-members (which includes dinner and live band). They also rent out the main hall on evenings and weekends for a fee.

Funds from the city cover salaries, utilities, and office supplies/equipment but not programs. Programming is covered through fees, donations (of money and furniture) and bequests. They have a men's club (501c3) that makes a donation, while other groups (such as AARP) meet at the center for free and make regular donations. They often find sponsors for bigger events (for example, a recent luncheon was provided by Atria, the local assisted living facility). They pay instructors with charges generated from class participants.

**Staffing:** Diane spends significant time writing grants and overseeing operations. The program supervisor is responsible for running day-to-day programs; potential instructors often come to ask if they can offer particular classes. A full-time custodian is critical for room set-up and turnover (there is another part-time custodian for evening events).

Diane offered to send information about: staffing patterns, rental fees and guidelines; grants; application for transportation program; link for newsletter; and town budget. She invited the committee to come down for a tour. The committee was appreciative of her presentation and offers.

## **7.0 OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## **8.0 ADJURNMENT**

Chair Klattenberg asked for a motion to adjourn. Made by Ed Dypa and seconded by Annabelle Malone, the vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.